Christian Community

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News From the Field

The Washington Packet on "Can We Keep Our Schools Free?" aroused considerable interest among the women in the Social Action Study Class of the First Congregational Church, Portland, Oregon. They were amazed to learn that there were organized "enemies" of the Public School and determined that they would find out what was going on before they criticized unfavorably the modern methods being used. The group was sharply divided as to the teaching of religion in the schools but agreed that Christian teachers were the best answer to the problem. One of the city's school supervisors was so impressed by the Packet that she filed the outline in the school library.

The group meets once a month. The period from 10:30 to 11:45 a. m. is given to a study of social action. Following a 45 minute period for a sandwich lunch, the group studies the mission theme from 12:30 to 1:45. The attendance is seldom more than 12 but reports are made to the various other circles of the Women's Fellowship.

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A hearty "Welcome!" to Volume 1, Number 1—the February, 1954 issue—of *The Oneida Courier.* The *Courier,* one page, mimeographed on both sides, gives a brisk account of the plans and activities of the Oneida Association Social Action Committee. C. A. Edson, of Syracuse, New York, is chairman of the committee.

At its fall meeting, December 5, held at Plymouth Church in Syracuse, the committee discussed the Report of the Board of Review. At this meeting it was decided to bring together three times a year delegates from the churches, who will work together to stimulate the desirable and necessary "grass roots" interest in a wide range of problems in human relations.

The Oneida groups have given attention to migrants, local housing projects, world order, and race relations.

Current Concerns In Social Welfare

By Catherine Lee Wahlstrom

Since January first, proposals have been made and bills introduced in the health and welfare field which will affect every man, woman, or child in the United States, directly or indirectly. Citizens of the "Christian community" need to be informed and alert about these significant proposals. This article will discuss only three of these: Social Security, Public Assistance, Grants-in-Aid.

Since the inception of Social Security in 1935, the principle of social insurance, financed by employees' and employers' contributions has been generally accepted as a means to prevent dependency. As President Eisenhower said on January 14, 1954, "In response to the need for protection arising from the complexities of our modern society, the Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) system was developed. Under it nearly 70 million persons and their families are now covered, and some 6 million are already its beneficiaries. Despite shortcomings which can be corrected, this system is basically sound. It should remain, as it has been, the cornerstone of the government's programs to promote the economic security of the individual."

Social Security Supported

Before the President's message on Social Security, Representative Carl Curtis had introduced a bill which "virtually strikes at the principle of Social Security as insurance. It challenges the fundamental principles of relationship between the amount contributed and the amount received." A group of civic leaders and social workers through the National Social Welfare Assembly drew up a set of "Basic Principles of Social Security," especially in relation to Old Age and Survivors Insurance. These Principles may be secured by writing to the National Social Welfare Assembly, 345 East 46th Street, New York 17, N. Y. They are presented to local groups for discussion and adoption, since the Assembly does not itself take action on such matters.

(Continued on Page 4, Col. 1)

URGE CHURCHES TO HELP SETTLE REFUGEES

Immediately after World War II, many of our churches helped to resettle thousands of displaced persons and expellees. When our "DP" legislation expired, we assisted the World Council of Churches in resettling refugees in other countries.

Under the Refugee Relief Act of 1953, it is again possible to help these people settle here. The law requires that every refugee have a sponsor who will furnish assurances that the newcomer will have housing and employment and will not be an economic or social liability. Protestant church agencies will cooperate in meeting this humanitarian obligation.

The Congregational Christian Service Committee, through the Reverend Charles S. Sowder, chairman of its Committee on Resettlement, is asking for five hundred sponsors for refugee families. Says Mr. Sowder, "We suggest the church stand back of the sponsor so that it is a parish project."

Dr. Reginald H. Helfferich, executive secretary of the World Service Commission of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, also urges individuals and congregations to cooperate in helping these troubled people get a new start in life. A similar goal is proposed.

Necessary forms, information and assistance may be secured by Congregational Christians from Mr. Sowder at 14 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Massachusetts, and by Evangelical and Reformed from Dr. Helfferich at 1720 Chouteau Avenue, St. Louis 3, Missouri.

Washington Report

While dependent people the world over fight to gain greater control over their lives, our own "dependents," the American Indians, are engaged in a fight to retain the promised protection of their "conqueror," the Government of the United States. Ten bills now pending before Congress would terminate the protection of the United States' century-old policy from about 70,000 Indians, the most important tribal groups affected being the Flatheads in Montana and the Klamath in Oregon.

The new withdrawal policy is based on desire for economy, stimulated by influence of important business interests desirous of laying their hands on resources now held in trust for Indian tribes and anti-paternalistic ideology ill-applied to Indian problems. Moreover, past neglect of Government obligations to the Indians now incredibly complicates withdrawal policy, since Indians have not been prepared to manage their own assets independently, and in fact often live, as testimony before Congress shows, at an appallingly low level of existence.

The Indians, aware of their treaty and statute rights, have therefore generally opposed the withdrawal bills, although some Indians who have left the reservations and have been successful in white society favor distribution in cash or kind of tribal property, sometimes lured by the hope of high per capita payments which may not materialize at all if liquidation is hasty.

Congressional Committee members have tried to impress upon Indians affected that the withdrawal bills would "liberate" them, give them full citizenship; but Indians know that they are American citizens with the right to vote and that the immediate effect of these bills would be local property taxation of their lands and cattle and likely mass tax sales, such as occurred in Oklahoma in the late twenties. They rightly fear loss of their homelands and do not feel advanced by freedom to dispose of their properties unaided.

At congressional hearings, Assistant Secretary of Interior Orme Lewis stated that the ability of the tribes to go it on their own had been carefully considered by the Department. Actually, the bills are all similar in content and intended to set the pattern for U. S. withdrawal. Testimony in committee shows clearly that many tribes are not ready for withdrawal of protection and that no effective agreement has been reached with local authorities for rendering of services to be discontinued by Federal Government and for protection against discrimination, still frequently found. Moreover, even if in some cases withdrawal were justified, the mechanism set up in the bills fails to protect Indians sufficiently: (1) Secretary of Interior is granted ultimate authority to determine membership in a tribe, disregarding existing tribal authorities or court control. (2) Power to appoint guardians for minors and others is vested ultimately in Secretary's discretion without court proceedings normally applicable. (3) Tribal property may be transferred to a trust or corporation, but the Secretary need not acceed to the request of the tribe and may order liquidation instead. (4) Timetables for establishing the tribal roll and setting up corporation or trust for tribal property do not take into account usual length of time required to solve legal problems and complete the administrative process. Moreover, the bills revoke the tribal charters granted under Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. No reason appears why this form of tribal organization for Indians should not be preserved instead of applying business corporation forms not adapted to the special purposes involved.

Other Indian bills now pending, especially H.R. 1921, regarding possessory rights to land in Alaska, H.R. 4985 on competency of Indians, and S. 331 on property held by a multiplicity of heirs, all tend to discriminate against Indian rights and favor forcible disersal of Indian property. It is to be hoped that Congress will take a second look at all this legislation and will merely pass the amendments requested by President Eisenhower, to make Indian consent a condition for application of state laws to Indians—a condition omitted from P.L. 280, adopted last June. Increased appropriations and constant effort by the Indian Service to raise the standard of living of the Indians and educate them towards effective management of their properties may then bring much closer the day when withdrawal may meet needs and approval of the American Indian tribes.

Frank S. Ketcham

Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. Sent free to interested pastors and social action committees. Additional copies may be obtained for 3 cents each.

Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, Ray Gibbons, Director, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

Requests by Evangelical and Reformed and general communications should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

VOTE HERE

The Christian Citizenship Committee wants your advice about the subjects treated in future Washington Packets. In the past year, over 600 such packets have been used on the subjects of China and the U. N., Natural Resources and Taxes. If you used one or all of these Packets, please give the Committee the benefit of your experience. We would like a brief report of how you found the Packets useful.

Whether or not you have used the Washington Packets in the past, please indicate on a postcard your selection or preference among the following topics:

(1) Juvenile Delinquency
(2) Public Responsibility and Mental Health
(3) Housing and Racial Discrimination
(4) Meeting the Health Needs of the Nation
(5) Combating Communism in Asia
(6) Fair Return for All Farmers
(7) Others

Please send your vote to Mr. Frank S. Ketcham, chairman, 1828 Jefferson Place, N.W., Washington 6, D. C.

International Relations Letter

March 15, 1954

Letters are coming in asking what the C.S.A. thinks about revision of the U. N. Charter. William Loos, member of the International Relations Committee thinks — and I agree — that we would better not talk too much about "revision." The question of whether the Charter should be "reviewed" is scheduled for debate in the General Assembly in 1955. There is no assurance that there will be revisions. Should there be? Perhaps, but remember that the Charter could be revised for the worse as well as for the better. Suggestions for revision are of course being made—the C. S. A. is compiling a file of such suggestions—but it is just possible that in the present state of the world it would be better not to tamper with the Charter. Most of us are tempted to think that if the UN does not "solve the major problems presented to it there must be something wrong with the organization that could not be corrected by changing the rules. It is something of the same attitude that has made some people want to change the U. S. Constitution. The main trouble, we should never tire of reminding ourselves, is not in constitutions, charters and organizations. We can probably do more good by studying and supporting Point 4, for example, than by concentrating on changing the U. N. Charter. On the whole subject see pages 21-22 in *Christian Faith and International Responsibility.*

TWO GOOD BOOKS

I am delighted with Jonathan Bingham's book, *Shirtsleeve Diplomats* and want to recommend it to all who are interested in what we are doing to help the underdeveloped areas through technical assistance. Bingham knows how to write for ordinary folks. The book is full of well-told factual stories of what is being done. It's a wonderful book to read for yourself, to review in a meeting, to study in a group.

The other book is *But We Were Born Free* by Elmer Davis. His long chapter on "Through the Perilous Night" is perhaps the most satisfactory short discussion we have on mccarthyism. Parenthetically, Senator McCarthy tries to label opposition to himself by asserting that the term "mccarthyism" was coined by the communist *Daily Worker.* That happens *not* to be true. It was first used by the columnist, Max Lerner, and then picked up by the *Daily Worker.* Your devotion to the real American spirit, as against mccarthyism, which the historian Walter Millis calls "a thing of loathing and horror," will be stimulated by reading the Davis book. His wonderful sense of humor does not detract from the book!

OFF TO THE MIDDLE EAST

By the time this letter is read its author and members of the 1954 C.S.A. seminar will be about ready to leave for Europe and the Middle East. I have been particularly eager to get acquainted in the Arab countries and Israel, partly because they are in an explosive and important part of the world and, partly, because in the Arab-Israeli debate I have been partial to Israel and, therefore, need to see the Arab side at first hand. Our missionary leaders are overwhelmingly — almost 100%—pro-Arab. And that is understandable. Some of us who have had long and close associations with liberal Judaism in this country are, also understandably, favorably inclined toward Zionism. As usual, the whole truth is on neither side. Well, we shall see and talk with both Arab and Israeli leaders see something of the Arab refugees, observe the new life in Israel.

And with that, we'll call it enough for this issue.

Herman F. Reissig

Speaking of Books

Apostles of Discord, by Ralph Lord Roy (Beacon Press, $3.75) is a timely study of many Protestant fringe groups which promote hate and discord within American society. It should be particularly useful to anyone who meets with people who are influenced by the flow of ultrafundamentalistic, anti-semitic, anti-Negro, anti-Catholic, anti-Naional Council of Church literature which is being circulated by the apostles of discord throughout Protestant churches.

Here is abundant material to make Protestants aware of the extensive campaign of hate and prejudice against minority groups being conducted by such men as Gerald Winrod, Gerald L. K. Smith, and others. Here is also a well documented account of efforts that are being made by many extreme social reactionaries to discredit especially the ecumenical activities of the National Council of Churches. This book ought to be read by ever leader who is concerned about the Protestant social witness in today's world. *F.N.S.*

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Not long ago Reinhold Niebuhr in *The Irony of American History* (Scribners, $2.50) gave us a suggestive interpretation of certain conspicuous elements in the experience of the United States. In his most recent volume of essays, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (Scribners, $3.00) he brings his faith to bear upon some of the concrete phenomena of politics. He does not omit such philosophic and historic questions as faith and the empirical method, or Augustine's approach to politics. But he also focuses his penetrating mind upon such contemporary problems as communism, world government, and American foreign policy.

The wisdom and range of Niebuhr's interest and activity is a constant reminder of the importance of perspective and depth in our approach to social decisions. *H.F.K.*

IN THIS ISSUE

Catherine Lee Wahlstrom is Associate Executive Director of the Department of Social Welfare of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in in the U. S. A.

Frank S. Ketcham is chairman of the Christian Citizenship Committee of the Council for Social Action.

F. Nelson Schlegel, is the Associate Secretary of the Commission on Christian Social Action.

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CORRECTION

The Interdenominational Institute on Racial and Cultural Relations announced in the April *Christian Community* as meeting at Eden Seminary will be held instead at the National College for Christian Workers, Kansas City, Missouri, August 2-7.

CURRENT CONCERNS

(Continued from Page 1, Col. 3)

The President's message on Social Security is highly significant in at least two important respects, according to the American Association of Social Workers' Public Social Policy Bulletin (#2793, January 25, 1954). "First, strong support for adherence to the principle of Old Age and Survivor's Insurance benefits based on previous earnings and contributions can only be construed as a definite repudiation of the Chamber of Commerce-Curtis position and (2) its recommendations move substantially in the same direction as the Democratic Lehman-Dingell bill, thus placing this program on a virtually bi-partisan basis of progressive support." This message is printed in full in the Congressional Record for January 14 and carries the number House Document No. 295*. Church study groups may wish to secure from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D. C., an excellent series of Fact Sheets explaining the background, nature, and effect of each of the President's proposals.

Legislation Pending

Two bills have been introduced by Rep. Daniel Reed of New York, incorporating the President's proposals and, incidentally, including all but two points of the Assembly's basic principles mentioned above. HR 7199*, superseding the earlier Reed bill, HR 6812, makes a number of important recommendations for OASI.

• *Coverage:* The major groups for which coverage is recommended on a compulsory basis are farm operators, self-employed professional groups now excluded, and hired farm workers and household workers who receive at least $50 a quarter cash wages from an employer. Coverage is recommended on a voluntary group basis for clergymen and for employees covered by state and local government retirement systems (except policemen and firemen).

• *Benefits:* A number of provisions would increase benefits for retired workers, their dependents, and their survivors. The wage base would be increased both for taxation and in computing benefits from a maximum of $3600 to $4200. This would mean higher benefits for all those earning over $3600 a year. A more liberalized benefit formula is recommended. Minimum benefits are increased from $25 to $30 a month and maximum individual benefits from $85 to $108.50 a month. Average earnings, on which benefits are computed, would be raised by disregarding the lowest four years of earnings.

• *Earnings permitted OASI beneficiaries:* A retired worker receiving benefits would now be permitted to earn $1000 a year without loss of benefit instead of being limited to $75 in any one month as at present.

• *"Disability Freeze:"* The bill provides that an insured worker disabled for longer than six months would not lose his OASI benefit rights or have his benefits reduced as a result of his inability to work.

A companion bill to HR 7199 described above, is one dealing with Public Assistance, HR 7200*. Public Assistance is administered by local and state governments, assisted by federal grants-in-aid. This bill HR 7200 also follows the President's recommendations. It revises the formula by which the federal government reimburses the states for their assistance payments to the needy aged, dependent children, the blind, and the totally disabled. This bill affirms the positive character of the federal share in the federal-state local public welfare partnership.

Grants-In-Aid

The questions of Federal Grants-in-Aid and of Federal-State relationships are being studied by the Federal Commission on Intergovernmental Relations.

The February issue of CHRISTIAN SOCIAL WELFARE (published by the Department of Social Welfare, National Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.) contains a digest of the weaknesses and strengths of Federal grants-in-aid, as compiled by Spokesmen for Children, a group concerned with social legislation. Recent proposals seek to correct the inefficiencies and complexities of Grants without destroying the principle of aid to needy in needy states. The larger part of the two billion dollars a year in Federal grants goes to the fields of social security, health, and education.

Church welfare agencies and social action committees are urged to study the various proposals. Your discussion will mean a great deal more if you think of individuals you know who will be affected by these proposals, rather than the mass group of millions upon millions in Social Security. Will the children down the street whose father deserted them be affected by these proposals? What does this change mean to 72 year old Mrs. Brown who depends on public assistance to augment her small Social Security payments? What will happen to the people in those poorer states which are dependent upon federal grants? What does it mean to you and me if the insurance principle is attacked and reserves depleted?

These important issues of Social Security, Public Assistance, and Federal Grants-in-Aid are of great concern to churches and the people they serve. Since the government (local, state, and national) has developed plans to prevent dependency up to a certain point and to provide basic material needs, church welfare agencies have been more free to minister to other needs of individuals: spiritual, social, and emotional. With this as a base, the churches are able to go far beyond in giving the loving, individualized, enriched program which Christ emphasized for every individual.

** Available on request from the House Document Room, Washington, D. C.*

CSA PLANS INSTITUTES

Outstanding national leaders will lead two social action institutes to be held at the Massachusetts Congregational Conference Center, Framingham, Massachusetts, July 27 to 31, 1954.

Each institute will run for three days. The first, dealing with "Basic Social Concern," will feature addresses by Dr. Frederick L. Fagley, Dr. John C. Bennett, and Dean Walter Muelder of the Boston School of Theology. The second institute, beginning on July 29th, will center around "Our Christian International Responsibility," with the Reverend Herman F. Reissig and well known authorities in the field of American foreign policy as speakers. On the overlapping day attention will be given to social action programs in churches and conferences.

Dr. Ray Gibbons will conduct a workshop for chairmen of women's state programs and social action committees of state conferences east of the Mississippi. A similar workshop will be arranged in September for chairmen west of the Mississippi.

These institutes are sponsored jointly by the Massachusetts Conference and the Council for Social Action. Total cost of the two institutes is $20. Applications should be sent now to the Reverend Myron W. Fowell, 14 Beacon Street, Boston 8, Massachusetts.